

11.22.63

DATE Debuts Feb. 15 | TIME Streaming | NETWORK Hulu

REVIEW BY Jeff Jensen @EWDocJensen

► **'TIS THE SEASON** for traveling through time and killing very bad men. One month after The CW launched the quantum-leaping superhero fantasy *DC's Legends of Tomorrow*, Hulu gives us *11.22.63*, a miniseries adaptation of Stephen King's book. James Franco is Jake, a teacher who learns that his diner-owning pal Al (Chris Cooper) has a wormhole in his pantry. *Okay*. With ridiculous speed, Jake agrees to take on Al's great heroic project, one steeped in baby-boomer grief for a what-could-have-been past: preventing JFK's assassination by murdering Lee Harvey Oswald (Daniel Webber). Some teachers make a difference by inspiring a love of learning; others become lone nuts to stop other lone nuts.

Like King did in his book, exec producer Bridget Carpenter establishes clear rules for time travel and creates emotional and conceptual stakes by rigorously following them. Time itself tries to thwart Jake's quest with its own assassination attempts—a random fire here, a runaway car there. Jake's odyssey is all side missions and epic prep, most of it made interesting by well-played supporting characters, including Josh Duhamel (*Battle Creek*) as Jake's first target, Canadian actress Sarah Gadon as Jake's love interest, and Cherry Jones (*Transparent*) as Oswald's mom. Carpenter never makes Jake's motives credible (like: Why is he so certain saving JFK will make everything better?), but the weakest link is Franco's often low-watt, seemingly disinterested performance. *11.22.63* reaches some thoughtful, moving conclusions, but oh, what coulda been with a more engaged star. If only there were a time machine to fix that mistake. **C+**



▲ James Franco



Chris Carter Reopens *The X-Files*

With the new season of Fox's sci-fi series winding down (the finale airs Feb. 22 at 8 p.m.), Carter spills secrets about the return of the Lone Gunmen, David Duchovny's "Achy Breaky" moves, and the possibility of yet another film. **By Darren Franich**



The last time we saw the Lone Gunmen they were dead. How do they reappear on the show?

When you're dead on *The X-Files*, you're never necessarily gone. There are ways to bring people back in dream sequences, flashbacks, and the like. This was an opportunity to use them in what is a presumed psychedelic hallucination.

Not to spoil anything, but can we talk about how the hallucination involves Mulder dancing to "Achy Breaky Heart"?

I was a big fan of the Christopher Walken-Fatboy Slim video collaboration, "Weapon of Choice." I wanted to have Mulder do something like that. We actually had a choreographer work with David [Duchovny]. David isn't a trained dancer, but he's very athletic. And he's also game.

The Lone Gunmen were beloved by fans, and even had their own short-lived spin-off. Did you ever regret killing them?

We did what the network, in essence, did [to] the show: pull the plug! I was sad to see them go. They were go-to characters when you needed weird exposition. I didn't want to pretend they weren't dead but was looking for any way to bring them back.

Speaking of dead characters: People were surprised to see the Cigarette Smoking Man alive in the season premiere.

In the final episode this season, we really spell out how he avoided what seemed like a certain fate. You're also going to see the character Monica Reyes [played by Annabeth Gish]. The only person we wanted to bring back and didn't was Robert Patrick. He was [busy shooting] *Scorpion*.

The Feb. 15 episode also features guest stars Robbie Amell and Lauren Ambrose. How do they fit into *The X-Files*?

Fox said to me, really almost as an aside, "Would you ever consider spinning the show off?" For me, the show is Mulder and Scully, and David and Gillian [Anderson]. But I thought: "Why don't I just play with this idea of a younger Mulder and Scully?" I would call them a more extreme, wide-eyed Mulder, and a more aggressive Scully.



▲ (Clockwise from top left)
Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny;
the Lone Gunmen, played by Bruce
Harwood, Tom Braidwood, and Dean
Haglund; Chris Carter

The season premiere was called “My Struggle,” and the upcoming finale is titled “My Struggle II.” How does the finale tie back to the premiere?

It's the answer to the question posed by the first part of the two-parter. But as an answer, it only goes so far to the edge of the cliff. It is the predicament of their lives brought into the most frightening spotlight that I could imagine. The predicament of: Where is their child?

The show has been getting very good ratings. Have there been talks about another season, or a movie?

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[Fox Television Group chairman and CEO] Dana Walden asked, “If there were another series, when do you think you could begin work on it?” It wasn't an overture, more of a practical issue. That was before the show aired and they knew what the ratings would be. There's been no conversation about doing more of these. With the ratings news, it's hard to imagine that they wouldn't come back to us. I would love to do another movie. Especially coming off that second movie, which had such a heavy weight upon it: a summer-release, low-budget movie, with no promotion, in a crowded field of tentpole fare. I was asked to do so much with so little. And I tried! If we were to do another movie, it would need to be akin to the first movie, which I thought was a story worthy of the big screen. That said, I can't imagine they won't want to figure out how to do this on TV.



Paul Rust

Love is in the air: Meet the co-creator, co-writer, and star of Netflix's romantic new series (out Feb. 19). **By Marc Snetiker**

Iowa native Paul Rust was just 24 when his affable humor caught the attention of *Mr. Show* writer Scott Aukerman during a performance at an L.A. variety show. “He said, point-blank, ‘I want to make you famous’—which in your first year of moving to L.A. is all you’re hoping somebody would say,” Rust muses. Writing gigs on *Arrested Development* and *Comedy Bang! Bang!* followed, along with a lead role in 2009’s *I Love You, Beth Cooper*.

Shortly thereafter, a family-friendly movie pitch to Judd Apatow inspired the producer to suggest that Rust co-write *Pee-wee’s Big Holiday* alongside Paul Reubens. “I think out of the writers Judd knew, not many had written PG comedies with no curse words or dirty jokes,” the 31-year-old says. In the five years it took *Pee-wee* to get off the ground, Rust sold Apatow on *Love*, a film he had conceived with his wife, Lesley Arfin (the two met just months before she began writing for the Apatow-produced *Girls*). Apatow helped them develop *Love* into a TV rom-com about the simmering relationship between a neurotic (Rust) and a wild child (*Community*’s Gillian Jacobs). “The show’s mission statement ended up being, ‘How slow can we go?’” says Rust. With *Love* premiering Feb. 19 and *Pee-wee* on March 18, both on Netflix, Rust’s ascent seems to be anything but slow.